

BIBLE QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

Baptism is certainly an important Bible subject.

- a. The word “baptize,” or some form of the word “baptize,” occurs 115 times in 91 verses of the New Testament.
- b. Baptism was an important part of the ministry of John.
 - ▶ In fact, baptism was such an important part of John’s ministry that he was constantly referred to as “John the Baptist,” meaning “John the Baptizer” (14 times in Matt, Mk, and Lk)
 - ▶ The first thing Mark tells us about John is that “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins” -- Mark 1:4-5
- c. Baptism was equally important to the ministry of Jesus.
 - ▶ John 4:1 tells us that “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ...”
 - ▶ And Jesus commanded His apostles to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...” (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is a subject we are frequently asked questions about.

- a. People ask us why we teach what we teach about baptism.
- b. They ask why we place so much importance upon being baptized.
- c. They are often curious about why we baptize people at such odd hours and under such odd circumstances.
 - ▶ I have baptized people at midnight, 4:00 in the morning, 2:00 in the afternoon, etc
 - ▶ I have baptized people in a muddy pond, and in an unheated baptistry in the dead of winter.
- d. We ought to welcome questions about our beliefs and practices, and we ought to answer patiently every question.
 - ▶ We ought to be glad when people have enough interest in us and in spiritual things that it causes them to ask questions
- e. We must remember the Lord’s instruction: “always be ready to give a defense to who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15)
 - ▶ To give a defense simply means to give an answer.
 - ▶ The NIV renders the verse: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...”

In addition to the questions people often ask us about baptism today, the Bible writers record some very important questions that were asked about baptism in the first century.

- a. I want us to consider 3 questions that were asked about baptism in the Bible.
- b. A thorough answer to these 3 questions will answer just about all the questions that we are asked about baptism today.

1. Question: Is baptism from heaven, or is it from men?

Jesus asked some of the Jewish chief priests and elders this question about the baptism taught and practiced by John.

- a. Matthew 21:25 -- “The baptism of John -- where was it from? From heaven or from men?”

But the question Jesus asked about John’s baptism is an important question that should be asked about every baptism.

- b. It’s an important question that should be asked about the baptism that is taught and practiced by this congregation.
 - ▶ Is the baptism that is taught and practiced by this congregation from heaven? Or is it from men?
- c. If the baptism that is taught and practiced by this congregation is not from heaven, then it must be from men ... and if it is from men, then it is condemned by God.

- ▶ Mark 7:1-7 -- “Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. **And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**”’”

How can we determine if the baptism practiced by this congregation is from heaven? Answer: if it is exactly like the baptism Jesus commanded in every respect.

- a. **The right authority:** Commanded by Jesus; and the one being baptized is submitting to the command of Jesus – not submitting to a church ordinance ... not submitting to some denomination’s requirement for membership ... not submitting to pressure from parents or a spouse, or others.
 - ▶ Proof:
 - Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”
 - + Matthew 15:8,9 – “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”
 - Acts 2:38 -- “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
 - Acts 10:46-48 -- “... Then Peter answered, 47 ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ 48 And **he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.**”
- b. **The right action:** Immersion in water (not pouring or sprinkling; and not with rose petals, etc).
 - ▶ Proof:
 - Abbott-Smith’s Lexicon: *to dip, immerse, sink*
 - Thayer’s Lexicon: *immersion, submersion*
 - Green’s Lexicon: *an act of dipping or immersion*
 - Acts 8:38 -- “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water**, and he baptized him.”
 - Acts 10:47,48 -- “Can anyone forbid **water**, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”
 - Romans 6:4 -- “Therefore we were **buried** with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”
 - Colossians 2:12 -- “**buried** with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”
- c. **The right subjects:** Men and women (not infants and children) who have come to believe in Christ and are repentant with regard to their past sins.
 - ▶ Proof:
 - Acts 8:12 -- “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both **men and women** were baptized.”
 - + Every example in the NT is of men and women being baptized – not infants and children.

- Mark 16:15,16 – “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who **believes** and is **baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 - + Notice: “believes” comes before “baptized” ... and, “believes” and “baptized” comes before “saved”
 - Acts 2:37,38 – “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and let every one of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - + Notice: “repent” comes before “baptized” ... and, “repent” and “baptized” comes before “remission of sins”
- d. **The right purpose:** “For the remission of sins” (not to join a church; not because already forgiven; not to publicly identify with Christians, etc).
- ▶ Proof:
 - Acts 2:38/Matthew 26:28 – “for the remission of sins”
 - Acts 22:16 -- “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
- e. **The right impulse:** Faith. True baptism is an act of faith – “faith in the working of God” in the baptism.
- ▶ Proof:
 - Mark 16:16 -- “He who **believes** and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 - Colossians 2:11-12 -- “In Him you were also circumcised with the **circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12** buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through **faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.**”
- f. **The right attitude:** Humility – because it is, in effect, an appeal for God’s mercy.
- ▶ Proof:
 - Acts 22:16 -- “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, **calling on the name of the Lord.**”
 - 1 Peter 3:21 (NASB) -- “And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but **an appeal to God** for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, “

2. Question: Do you not know that when you were baptized into Christ you were baptized into His death?

Paul asked this question of Christians in order to refute the idea that salvation by grace means the saved person has a license to continue the practice of sin.

- a. Romans 6:1-3 -- “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”
 - ▶ Christians do not have permission from God to continue in the practice of sin.
 - ▶ Those who are Scripturally baptized receive the forgiveness of their sins, and they are brought into fellowship with Christ, and they rise from the watery grave of baptism to walk in newness of life (vs4).
- b. True Christians are those who have been forgiven of their sins and have quit the practice of sin ... they are living a new and different life [not a perfectly sinless life (1 John 1:8-10), but a life of faithful service to the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:2; Revelation 2:10)]
 - ▶ Galatians 2:20 -- “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”
 - ▶ Romans 6:2-19
- c. This new life begins when we are baptized into Christ.

- ▶ baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3)
 - ▶ baptized into His death (Romans 6:3)
 - ▶ raised (from baptism) to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4)
 - ▶ set free from sin when they obeyed from the heart (Romans 6:17-18)
 - Note: they were slaves of sin before they were baptized ... they obeyed from the heart ... they were freed from sin ... they became slaves of righteousness.
- d. And so, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul talks about fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners ... and says, “such were some of you.”
- ▶ It doesn't matter what you were, because you can be saved from any and all sin.
 - ▶ But it matters very much what you are.
 - ▶ And if you are after baptism ... what you were before baptism ... you are still lost! Sinners must change! (And that's what Romans, chapter 6 is all about).

God will save you from your sins. He will not save you in your sins.

3. Question: Who's baptism were you baptized with? (Or, who's baptism did you receive? Or, into what then were you baptized?)

The apostle Paul asked this question of some of John's disciples.

- a. Acts 19:1-5 -- “And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, 2 and he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ 3 And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Into John's baptism.’ 4 And Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ 5 And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
- b. It is clear, in the context, that when Paul asked, “Into what then were you baptized?” that he was asking, “Who's baptism were you baptized with?” Or, “Who's baptism did you receive?”
 - ▶ They answered, “Into John's baptism”
 - ▶ Clearly, they were saying, “We were baptized with John's baptism.” Or, “We received John's baptism.”
- c. Then Paul described for them the purpose and the authority of John's baptism.
 - ▶ John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.
 - ▶ John's baptism pointed to the Christ who would come after him: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry” (Matthew 3:11).
 - ▶ So John's baptism had authority while John lived, and until Christ died, but after Jesus came forth from the grave He claimed all authority in heaven and on earth, and He commanded that people become His disciples, and that they be baptized “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and that they be taught to obey Him in all things (Matthew 28:18-20)
- d. When these disciples of John heard this, “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v6).

This example makes it clear that not just any baptism will do. You cannot substitute another baptism for the baptism Christ commands.

- a. Into what then were you baptized? Who's baptism did you receive?
- b. We have already talked about Christ's baptism and all that it involves.
 - ▶ If you have been baptized with a different baptism, then you need to do what these disciples of John did.
 - ▶ You need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus ... for the remission of your sins.

Conclusion.

So, we have found 3 important questions about baptism in the Bible. And we have answered those questions from the Bible.

- a. Question #1: Is baptism from heaven, or from men?
- b. Question #2: Do you not know that baptism is into the death of Christ?
- c. Question #3: Whose baptism did you receive?

Now, I want you to consider one more Bible question about baptism before we quit the sermon and end the service.

- a. This question is for anyone of you who believes the truth about Jesus, but has not yet been baptized for the remission of your sins.
- b. This question is personal, and only you can answer it.
 - ▶ Question: Why are you putting off being baptized?
 - ▶ Ananias asked this question of Saul of Tarsus in **Acts 22:16**.
 - ▶ The only right way to respond to that question is the way Saul responded to it: **"he arose and was baptized" (Acts 9:18)**.
- c. You are lost in your sins, and Jesus commands you: **"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (v16)**.
 - ▶ Why are you waiting?

Sing: "Why Do You Wait, Dear Sinner?"